

PRESIDENT: Senator Vard Johnson. Senator Nichol is next.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I believe in the legislative process and in the waning days of every legislative session we depart from the legislative process and we get down to simply processing bills and processing bills means that we just pass them on, pass them on, pass them on like a grist mill irrespective of what they contain, irrespective of the thought or the lack thereof in the bills because we want to go home, we've got to process the bills. But being a believer in the legislative process I believe in the kind of discourse that floor debate requires so that people who want to do a piece of legislation will think about a piece of legislation, will think about the policy and the values in that piece of legislation and will make that kind of rational judgment that our constituents call upon us to make. LB 911, in its current form, represents a major change in alcohol and liquor policy in our state that will work an enormous detriment, a detriment to the well-being of public life in Nebraska. For the first time ever or at least since the Volstead Act, we will subject our local city councils to incredible pressures to grant and to deny liquor licenses under whatever standards local governments choose to adopt. Liquor licenses are very valuable commodities. They are very valuable commodities. The pressure on local officials to grant or deny valuable commodities, as liquor licenses are, in my view over the long pull, will subject public officials to the opportunity for graft and corruption. Graft and corruption has in the history of our nation been associated with the liquor industry and what has happened is that people who believe in good government work hard to eliminate it or reduce it or reduce the chances for it, but I guarantee you that if you make local officials the total judges, the total judges of who will get or who will not get a liquor license in a local community under local standards, you will be subjecting men and women of good will to enormous pressures, to those kinds of pressures that periodically are overborne by graft and corruption. I don't like to think of that happening in our state. The reason we have a statewide Liquor Control Commission consisting of three appointed people outside of the liquor industry is designed in the end to establish relatively uniform policies throughout our state and, frankly, to eliminate those kinds of terrible pressures that can occur at the local level. I believe that 911 in so totally abdicating state responsibility to local government, so totally abdicating it, gives too much pressure and responsibility to local government. I think this